



## **Department of Veterans Affairs**

Washington, D.C.

**The Honorable  
R. James "Jim" Nicholson  
Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs**



R. James "Jim" Nicholson was nominated by President George W. Bush to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs on December 9, 2004, and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on January 26, 2005. He was sworn into office on February 1, 2005.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Nicholson is the principal advocate for veterans in the U.S. government, ensuring that they receive the care, support, recognition and dignity they deserve for their service to our country. He also directs the Department of Veterans Affairs, the federal government's second largest Cabinet Department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs, and national cemeteries for America's veterans and dependents. With a budget of more than \$69 billion for fiscal year 2005, VA employs approximately 230,000 people at hundreds of VA medical centers, clinics, nursing homes, benefits offices, and national cemeteries throughout the country.

Prior to his nomination, Mr. Nicholson served as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, a position he held since 2001, where he became a well-known advocate in Rome for the elevation of human dignity, giving special emphasis to human trafficking, religious freedom, starvation and bio-tech food, HIV-AIDS, and international terrorism. He was knighted by Pope John Paul II in October 2003 for this work representing the U.S. to the Vatican.

Mr. Nicholson was born in 1938 and grew up on a tenant farm in northwest Iowa in a family of seven children. He is a 1961 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He served eight years on active duty as a paratrooper and Ranger-qualified Army officer, then 22 years in the Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of colonel. While serving in Vietnam, he earned the Bronze Star Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, the Meritorious Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and two Air Medals.

Mr. Nicholson earned a master's degree from Columbia University in New York, and a law degree from the University of Denver. He practiced law in Denver, specializing in real estate, municipal finance and zoning law. In 1978 he founded Nicholson Enterprises, Inc., a developer of planned residential communities, and in 1987 he bought Renaissance Homes, which became an award-winning builder of quality custom homes.

In January 1986, Mr. Nicholson was elected committeeman from Colorado for the Republican National Committee (RNC). In 1993 he was elected vice-chairman of the RNC, and in January 1997, he was elected chairman of the RNC, where he served for four years, through the elections of 2000.

Mr. Nicholson is married to the former Suzanne Marie Ferrell of Highland Falls, New York, who is an accomplished artist. They are the parents of three adult children.

*February 2005*